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E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/22/2020
TAGS: [PINR](#) [SF](#)
SUBJECT: (C//NF) REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON SOUTH AFRICAN
NONPROLIFERATION AND ENERGY OFFICIALS (C-AL9-02664)

REF: STATE 005946

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Walter N.S.Pflaumer for reasons 1.4 b and d.

1A. (C//NF) QUESTIONS CONCERNING ENERGY MINISTER ELIZABETH
DIPUO PETERS:

1) (C//NF) HOW DOES PETERS FIT INTO THE NONPROLIFERATION
DECISIONMAKING PROCESS?

Energy Minister Dipuo Peters plays a key role in nuclear energy and nonproliferation decision-making on behalf of the relatively recently created Ministry of Energy (split from Minerals from the old DME). The Ministry is still working on its transition and a new building. She is the key player in implementing South Africa's nuclear energy policy, which was set forth in the June 2008 Nuclear Energy Policy. She has publicly reaffirmed South Africa's commitment to expanding nuclear power in its energy mix, including ambitiously targeting 2020 for the next reactor of a potential fleet. However, the SAG has still not elucidated the way forward for nuclear power, since the cancellation of the Eskom tender in December 2008. The SAG is expected to play a stronger role and will be looking for a nuclear technology partner. Westinghouse and Areva were identified as preferred bidders under the earlier tender and are hoping the SAG will not do a do-over, which would delay a new plant(s). Decisions for nuclear policy will involve the Presidency and other key Ministries (Public Enterprises, DTI, DST, Treasury), Eskom, and the Nuclear Energy Corporation of SA.

2) (C//NF) IS PETERS IN CONTROL AT THE ENERGY DEPARTMENT?

Peters is perceived as under control at the Energy Department, but she has limited technical capacity herself and under her. She was previously Premier of the Northern Cape and had limited direct experience in energy and virtually none in nuclear. Her main qualifications appear to be her ANC connections and gender. She studied social work and even gained a degree in Cuba. With respect to her staff, the previous Chief Director: Nuclear Tseliso Maqubela was promoted to Deputy Director General Hydrocarbons, taking his nuclear experience with him. His previous deputy, Ditebogo Kgomo, was promoted to acting Chief Director: Nuclear. She is knowledgeable and accessible and has been attending international meetings, but may not have deep technical experience. Energy Director General Nelisiwe Magubane has previous responsibility for nuclear, but does not appear to have deep technical nuclear background. She led a bilateral mission to Washington in 2007. All these individuals are friendly with the U.S.

3) (C//NF) WHAT IS PETERS' RELATIONSHIP WITH DIRCO MINISTER
NKOANA-MASHABANE?

Post does not have specific information, but post has no

indication that these two successful ANC cadres have anything but a positive relationship. DIRCO has the lead for non-proliferation and the Department of Trade and Industry has the lead for the South African Council for the Non-proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction and its committees.

4) (C//NF) IS PETERS CONSIDERED CLOSE TO PRESIDENT ZUMA?

Post does not have specific information, but post presumes that they have a good relationship.

5) (C//NF) WAS PETERS WELL RESPECTED AS PREMIER OF THE NORTHERN CAPE PROVINCE (2004-MAY 2009)?

Peters was well respected as premier of the Northern Cape and was perceived as pro-business. A U.S. hydrocarbon firm with activities in the Northern Cape spoke positively to Energy Officer about their interactions with her.

6) (C//NF) DOES PETERS GO BY THE NAME ELIZABETH OR DIPUO? HOW IS DIPUO PRONOUNCED?

Peters appears to have followed the frequent African convention of dropping regular use of the name Elizabeth, using Dipuo (Dee-poo-who). Peters is of Sotho ethnicity.

7) (C//NF) WHAT IS PETERS LIKE TO DEAL WITH, AND WHAT ARE HER VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES?

Post has had limited contact with her. She has given a number of competent speeches on nuclear and energy. She met the U.S. NRC Commissioner at an IAEA conference in Cape Town

in December and he was impressed with her. She had a bilateral meeting and signed a long-awaited bilateral agreement on cooperation in nuclear energy R&D with Secretary Chu in Vienna in September 2009. She appears to have favorable views of the U.S.ECON, ORI, POL

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1B. Questions concerning former South African representative to the IAEA Abdul Minty, who will be replaced in January by Xolisa Mabhongo.

1) (C//NF) WHAT WILL MINTY'S NEW ROLE BE, AND WILL HE CONTINUE TO PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN SOUTH AFRICA'S NONPROLIFERATION STRATEGY? WHAT LEVEL OF INFLUENCE DOES POST JUDGE HE WILL HAVE?

Post has inquired regarding Minty's new role but has not received a clear answer from DIRCO interlocutors, who have said that Minty's role has not yet been decided. Ambassador Leslie Gumbi has replaced Xolisa Mabhongo as Chief Director for UN Policy. Regarding Minty's short-term role, Post received a diplomatic note indicating that Minty had been appointed Sherpa for the April 12-13 Nuclear Security Summit in Washington. As for Minty's long-term plans, there is speculation that he may take on a new role related to the entry into force of the Pelindaba Nuclear Free Zone Treaty, and there is also speculation that he may retire. Given that Minty is the single most important voice in the South African Government (SAG) on nuclear policy, we expect that Minty will

continue to have considerable influence over disarmament and nonproliferation policy.

2) (C//NF) WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MINTY AND MABHONGO, AND DOES MINTY RESENT BEING REPLACED BY SOMEONE SO JUNIOR.

Minty and Mabhongo appear to have a positive and collegial working relationship. We have no indications that Minty resented being replaced. Minty's return to Pretoria was expected following his defeat for the position of IAEA Director General.

3) (C//NF) DOES MABHONGO SHARE MINTY'S NAM-CENTRIC VIEW OF NONPROLIFERATION, AND DOES HE HAVE ANY HOT BUTTON ISSUES THAT HE'D LIKE TO SOLVE.

Mabhongo's interventions during the Einhorn and Jenkins visits suggest a tendency to be NAM-centric. During the inter-departmental meeting Mabhongo chaired for the Jenkins delegation, he referred several times to NAM consensus as an important guiding principle for South African policy.

4) (C//NF) WHAT IS MABHONGO LIKE TO DEAL WITH? WHAT IS HIS FAMILY SITUATION? DOES HE HAVE ANY HOBBIES?

Mabhongo is approachable and easy to deal with if a bit formal. He is married and is the father of twins. He maintains a wide range of friendships with fellow professionals from Eastern Cape, who mixed with DIRCO officials and diplomats at Mabhongo's recent surprise farewell adjacent to the Market Theater in Johannesburg.

5) (C//NF) WHAT ARE MABHONGO'S VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES?

Mabhongo speaks with affection of tenure in New York at the United Nations. He is fully committed to working with the United States to ensure a successful outcome of the 2010 NPT RevCon. Mabhongo and his DIRCO colleagues who specialize in disarmament and nonproliferation policy tend to blame the United States for allowing NPT consensus to erode after 2000. Mabhongo and DIRCO are cautiously responsive to U.S. overtures following Minty's defeat for IAEA DG.

6) (C//NF) WE HAVE LEARNED THAT JOHANN KELLERMAN, DIRCO DEPUTY DIRECTOR FOR NUCLEAR DISARMAMENT AND NONPROLIFERATION, HAS BEEN A LONG-TIME CONTACT OF THE EMBASSY. IF AVAILABLE, PLEASE PROVIDE PERSONAL INFORMATION ABOUT HIM. WHAT IS HE LIKE TO DEAL WITH, HIS VIEWS OF THE UNITED STATES, AND HOW HE FITS INTO THE DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.

Johan Kellerman is not a long-time Embassy contact. Kellerman returned to Pretoria in August 2009 from an eight-year posting to the Conference on Disarmament in Geneva. Kellerman traded places with Michiel Combrink, who was a long-time Embassy contact. Kellerman is married and has one college-aged and an adult son. Kellerman is congenial to deal with and is able to discuss policy. Kellerman is open to U.S. views, but thinks we get in our own way too often. As DIRCO's principal working-level expert on nonproliferation, Kellerman is constantly deluged with demarches from various

embassies and papers to prepare for South Africa's active participation in various international control groups. Kellerman also participates in inter-departmental export controls licensing decision-making.

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